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Whittling For Disaster

After the tragic and pathetic Bay of Pigs fiasco, Dr. Mario Lazo made a vow: "Even if it takes the rest of my life, I will find out why the invasion of Cuba failed."

(Dr. Lazo was one of Cuba's most distinguished international lawyers. He was a some-

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time-naturalized United States citizen who had gained access to and the confidence of highly-placed men in Washington. These were men who knew at first hand what had happened during the fateful days of April, 1961.)

After three years of pursuit to Spain and around the Caribbean to talk with Cuban survivors of the expedition and with Washington officials, his findings are published in The Reader's Digest for September.

The invasion of Cuba was not planned by Caroline Kennedy. It was planned originally in sketch by Dwight D. Eisenhower, and everyone knows the general does not plan for failure.

The original plans called for three air strikes by the Free Cuban Air Squadron of 16 B-26 planes. The first, April 15, was to have destroyed all or most of Castro's aircraft on the ground.

The second, set for Sunday morning, April 16, was to destroy any remaining Cuban aircraft and bomb anti-aircraft and other military installations. The third strike, scheduled for Monday morning, April 17, was to provide final assurance that every Castro plane was dead, hit tank, mobile gun and truck concentrations and sink the warship anchored near Cienfuegos, return to the base, "Happy Valley," in Nicaragua, refuel and fly support missions over the beachhead for the landing.

These plans were finally evolved by the CIA, approved by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and presidential assistants at a meeting April 4, presided over by President Kennedy, which included Richard M. Bissell, of the CIA, who spoke forcefully for "Operation Pluto;" Dean Rusk; General Lemnitzer; Admiral Burke; Allen Dulles, CIA director; his assistant, Gen. Cabell; Thomas Mann, assistant secretary of state; presidential Consultant Adolph Berle and Sen. J. William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Letting Fulbright in was the fatal mistake. His voice was the only one raised against the plan at that time, Lazo says. The senator denounced the plan as "immoral." Afterwards others, including Dean Rusk, veered from the original plan and President Kennedy, torn between the opposing factions and being "new and youthful," wavered more and more, despite violent protest from all concerned. The protests included vehement ones as that of Admiral Burke: "We are involved, sir. We trained and armed those Cubans. We helped land them on the beaches. . . Mr. President, we can't let those boys be slaughtered there!" And Mr. Fulbright had spoken of morality!

This was at invasion time after the first air strike had been cut by White House order to eight planes instead of 16; Strike 2 entirely canceled by White House order and Strike 3 canceled by White House decree when the pilots in Nicaragua were about to take off. They supposed that other arrangements had been made, so they had no hint to defy the orders.

The few planes allowed to participate were immediately downed by Castro's fast jets, the main supply ship sunk and the whole thing reduced to a fizzling fuse with no powder charge.

Even the site of the invasion was changed for the worse.

One cause of fear was that Castro might launch rockets at the continental United States. At that time Cuba had no launching pads for missiles, as was later proven, Dr. Lazo writes.

Dr. Lazo still hopes that freedom will come from the men in Castro's prisons; from Cubans still suffering his tyranny; from his disillusioned army and militia; from the underground which is reforming and discovering new leaders—dedicated, selfless patriot working without thought of personal gain or political reward.

But this will be a tremendous, uphill and costly task, in which the United States may

the tragic results of naively letting politicians dictate military decisions.